

HOW DO SCHOOLS BUY LOCAL FOOD?

Procurement FAQs for Florida Farmers and Agricultural Producers



Florida schools and school districts have multiple ways to buy local. Two key methods include:

- 1 For Informal Purchases:** Micro-purchasing (threshold varies – often \$15,000 but up to \$50,000).
- 2 For Formal Purchases:** “Local” may be used as a specification in an invitation for bid (IFB) or request for proposal (RFP).

Both methods allow Florida schools to use school lunch funds to buy local, so kids have access to fresher, more nutritious foods. Meanwhile, investing federal funds in local farmers and producers infuses money into the local economy.

WHO DEFINES “LOCAL”?

Schools can define what they mean by local. The definition may change based on the products, seasons, events, and other factors. Some options: within Florida, within the county, or within a certain mile radius.

WHAT IS INFORMAL PROCUREMENT?

- 1 Micro-Purchases:** Enable schools to purchase supplies or services without formal solicitation or obtaining quotes.
- 2 Simplified Acquisitions:** Offer a less formal process for acquiring competitive quotes, in which schools can acquire two or more quotes over the phone, face-to-face, or by email.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A MICRO-PURCHASE?

“Micro-purchase” typically refers to purchases when a single transaction does not exceed the established micro-purchase threshold (MPT), currently set in federal regulations at \$15,000.

However, federal and Florida state laws allow schools to self-certify an increased micro-purchase threshold of up to \$50,000.

Note: They may also have a lower threshold imposed at the local level – even as low as \$1,500.

WHAT IS FORMAL PROCUREMENT?

- 1 Sealed bids:** Involve publicly advertising an invitation for bid (IFB).
- 2 Proposals:** Require schools to issue a request for proposal (RFP) then publicize the solicitation.

Formal Procurement is for purchases above \$350,000 (the federal threshold). Sometimes, governments and school districts set lower thresholds which supersede the federal threshold.

The current State of Florida simplified acquisition and formal procurement threshold for public and charter schools is **\$50,000**.

WHAT IS THE GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE OPTION?

- 1 Using “local” as a specification in IFBs and RFPs, including “locally grown,” “locally raised,” or “locally caught,” meaning schools can remove products or bids that do not meet this standard.
- 2 Using a defined scoring advantage while scoring bids, giving additional points or credit to bids that meet the definition of local. “Local” as specification is more streamlined than the defined scoring advantage approach.

Geographic preference can be used for unprocessed agricultural products, including products that are frozen, peeled/cut, shucked, ground, dried, packaged, or pasteurized, and products with added preservatives to prevent oxidation.



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A National School Lunch Program Initiative

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COMMUNITIES WIN.**

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ABOUT FLORIDA FARM TO SCHOOL

Florida's Farm to School initiative works to increase Florida commodities served in schools, offer more nutritiously balanced meal options for Florida's children, and get students involved with nutrition and agriculture education – all while fostering positive economic relationships between food producers and schools to enrich local economies.

In a 2023 survey, roughly one-third of Florida CNP operators reported actively procuring local foods for school meals. Another 21% planned to the following school year.